



Rachel Blaney

Member of Parliament
North Island-Powell River

The Honorable Bernadette Jordan
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

June 30, 2021

Via email: min@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Re: Transition plan for aquaculture workers

Dear Minister Jordan,

I am writing to ask again about your transition plan for affected workers in the aquaculture industry in BC.

My constituency office is receiving calls from aquaculture workers who are being laid off by the companies operating open-pen salmon farms in the Discovery Islands. As we all knew would happen, the workers are facing an uncertain economic future following your decision to phase out existing salmon farming facilities in the Discovery Islands.

While I have and will continue to respect your decision about the fish farms, my New Democrat colleagues and I also have repeatedly asked you and your government to accompany your decision with a strong transition plan for the affected workers. These are good people who are concerned for their livelihoods and their survival in our coastal communities. We cannot allow them to fall through the gaps that your government created and sentence them to a life of struggling to make ends meet.

One of the workers that called my office was distressed because he was not able to access government funding for retraining. Evan is a salmon farmer who is employed by one of the aquaculture companies operating in the Discovery Islands. He had received notice from his employer and was told that his last day of work would be July 7. He decided this would be a good time to upgrade his knowledge and skills. He wants to enroll in a university degree program in the field of aquaculture and wondered if there would be financial support available to him through the Employment Insurance program for workers who are seeking retraining.

Unfortunately, ESDC told him that he did not qualify because the degree he was hoping to study was not considered retraining due to the length of time it takes to finish.

This begs the question, why is your department not working with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to create a program that would support retraining/re-educating aquaculture workers who are affected by the transition away from open-pen salmon farms on the west coast?

Your government continually refers to the “whole of government approach.” This is precisely the type of situation that requires exactly that approach. The needs of these workers are real. Please do not ignore them.

Minister, you have repeatedly told me and the public that your department will consider the social impacts of the Government’s decision to transition away from open-pen salmon farming. It has been six months since I wrote to you about this issue. Workers are starting to lose their jobs with no federal support for transition.

I am very disappointed in the lack of response on this point from you. I expected your decision on the closure of open-pen salmon farms to be connected to a strong transition plan for the affected workers. How could you possibly undertake one without the other?

These workers are reaching out for help because of the impact of a decision that you made, Minister. At the very least, you owe them a response. At the very best, you owe them support. Please do your very best.

Sincerely,



Rachel Blaney, MP
North Island-Powell River

Cc: Gord Johns, NDP Critic for Fisheries and Oceans

Ottawa
900 Justice Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
(613)992-2503

Campbell River Office
427 10th Avenue
Campbell River, BC V9W 4E4
1(800)667-8404
Rachel.Blaney@parl.gc.ca

Powell River Office
4697 Marine avenue
Powell River, BC V8A 2L2
(604)489-2286